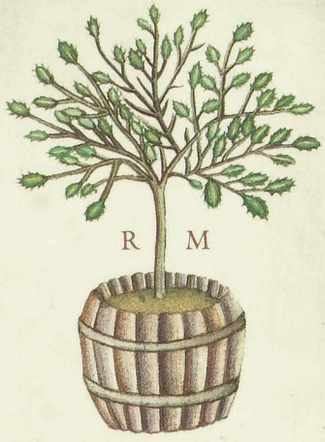
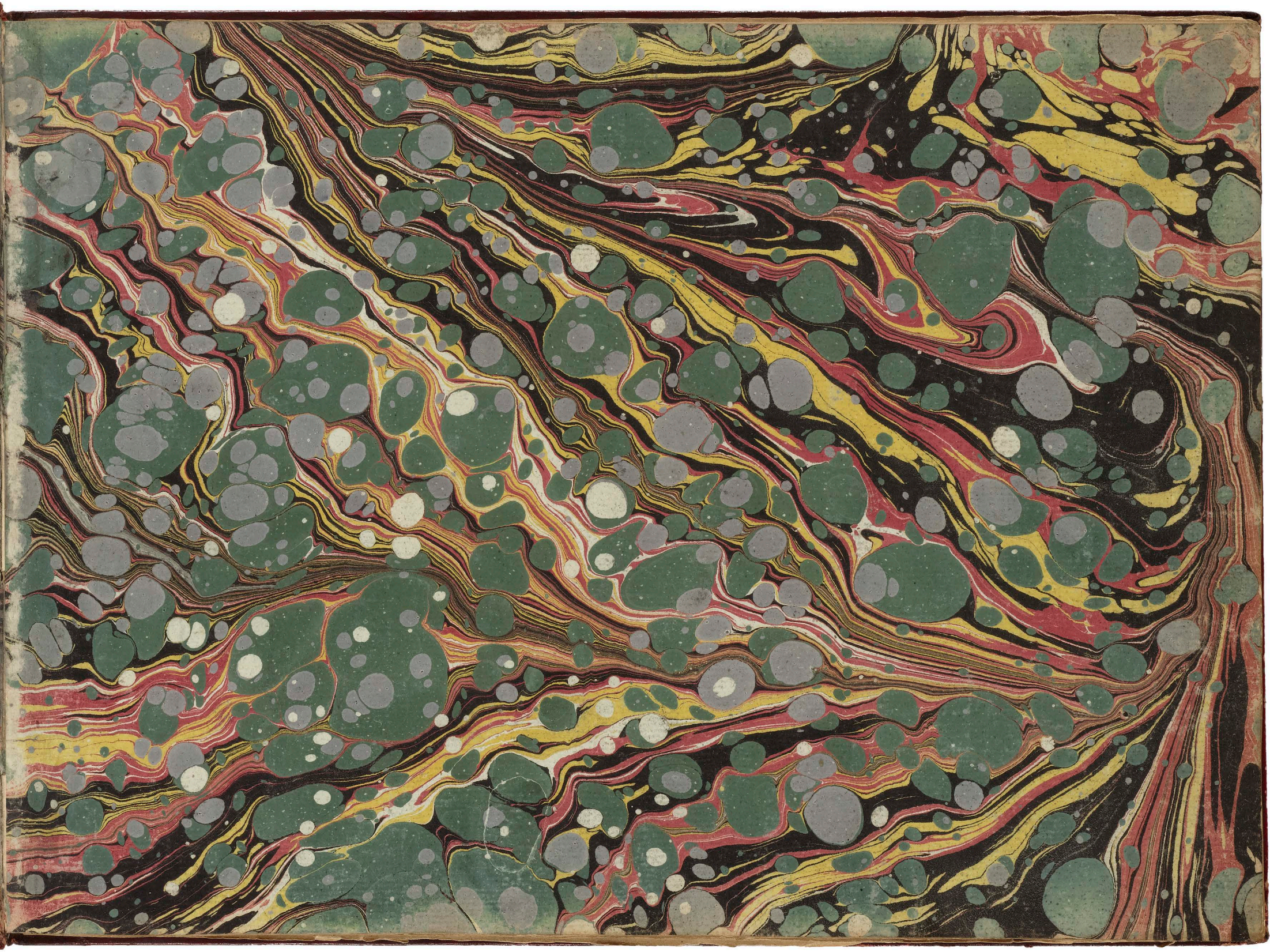
Oak Spring
Paul Mellon



Oak Spring Garden Library



H. Repton inv.t & delin.t

T. Medland Sculp.t

ASTON PARK

in Cheshire

A Seat of

Hawey Aston Esq.r

Introduction.

Sir,

It may possibly appear from the following pages that I have considered the improvements of Aston on a smaller scale than the respectability of the place requires; but it will be found much easier to extend a small plan, than to contract a large one; yet the immediate intention of the plan which I have the honour to suggest, is, to form a <u>whole</u>, perfect in itself without waiting the tedious lapse of ages for those effects of <u>distant</u> plantations, which will more speedily be produced by <u>small</u> plantations brought nearer to the eye. It may be necessary for me to explain the principles on which I found my opinion, and I hope my arguments will prove that the plan proposed is both rational and expedient.

I have the honour to be Sir
Your most obedient and
humble Servant
H Repton

At Aston April 12.th 1793.
Harestreet by Romford July 1793.

Kitchen Garden
Stable
A
A
B
B
B
B
C
C
C
C
THE HOME=
EXPERIMENTAL=FARM
The River Weever

Character and Situation.

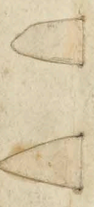
Few places have fallen under my direction, that afford so striking an example of the character and situation being at variance with each other as the house and Grounds of Aston; on both these objects the same mistaken principles seem to have operated. The house is large yet posseses little importance of appearance in proportion to its real magnitude, because it is too lofty for its base: and the grounds have been opened and extended beyond all reasonable bounds, so that the lawn which ought to bear some proportion to the quantity of wood in a park, is rendered bleak and uninteresting by an attempt to extend the view, not considering, that without the contrast of Wood, a large expanse of lawn lessens the dignity of a place, by converting what should be a park into a large common farm.

I shall proceed to point out the improvement in the several views from the house.

View to the North.

Altho' none of the principal apartments look towards the north, yet as the view from the Hall door of a house should always be considered, this will require improvement. In the preceding sketch I have endeavoured to represent the effect of the plantations A.B. on the map, and it may be observed by the comparative height of the few large trees growing on the spot, that I have not anticipated a very distant expectation, for I suppose ten years will realize the effect here shewn.

The outline of the plantation is calculated to give an interesting play of light and shade, without a formal boundary; and tho' the ends of the plantations are brought far down the hill, and near the house, yet from the openings left between them, they will be lighter than any continued line of wood, and give an air of more extent and freedom, than an uniform shreen of plantation at much greater distance.



View to the East.

This being a View from the principal rooms in the house, its improvement should consist chiefly in rendering the landscape more appropriated to the mansion from whence it is seen; and as this is the only direction in which we can obtain a great extent of park-scenery, I think it essential to the dignity and importance of the place, that all appearance of arable land in contact with the lawn should be excluded. There are fortunately some masses of trees scattered on this lawn, which will help to disguise the outline of a shreen, and make it appear a great depth of wood; but as the shreen is narrow in some places, it will be necessary to render it every where impervious to the eye by thick copse wood, and a tight hedge at the back; lest the corn when ripe be seen glittering thro' the stems of the trees; this would totally defeat the great object of our improvement, which is to present a natural glade of lawn betwixt two varied lines of respectable woods.

The Farm and Park.

I am aware that in the present laudable rage for Agriculture, it is very unpopular to assert that a farm and a park may not be united; but after various efforts to blend these two objects without violation of good taste, I am convinced that they are, and must be distinct objects, and ought never to be brought together in the same point of view, as seen from the windows of a mansion.

The difficulty of uniting a park and a farm arises from this material circumstance, that the one is an object of beauty or ornament; and the other of sordid gain or profit: the scenery of both consists of ground, trees, and cattle, but the manner in which these ingredients of beauty are displayed in a farm with a view to profit, is as unlike the same things in a park with a view to ornament; as the furniture in an elegant drawing-room, and the same furniture ranged for sale in the Warehouse of an Upholster. Since ornamental ground is less profitable than arable land, the more we can lessen the quantity of the former without an air of meanness or confinement, the less we have to regret the sacrifice of profit to beauty, and on this principle I propose to bring the plantation C. so forward, as to contract the lawn and inclose the stables within a mass of wood to hide them.

Experimental Farm.

The shape of corn fields and the straight lines of fences are so totally at variance with all ideas of picturesque beauty, that I shall not venture to suggest any hints on the subject of a farm as an ornament, yet I think there might be a distinction made betwixt the farm of the poor tenant who must convert every inch of land to profit, and that occupied by a Gentleman for the purposes of amusement and experiment. It is common in Hampshire and indeed in the neighbourhood of many forests, to divide the inclosures of a farm by rows of copse wood and timber, from ten to twenty yards wide, and at a little distance these rows appear united, and become one rich mass of foliage. This kind of subdivision I should wish to be everywhere adopted in the experimental farm at Aston, the advantages of this measure will be,

1st. Shady and pleasant walks thro' the farm.

2dly. It will afford shelter to the corn, and to the cattle that are grazed on the farm.

3dly. It will give the whole at a distance the appearance of one vast mass of wood.

4thly. It will make an admirable cover for Game, and lastly if it should ever hereafter be thought advisable to extend the lawn, it will furnish ample means of leaving many handsome trees to remain single or in groups on the lawn.

The View South and West.

The rich and extensive prospect which I have endeavoured to represent in the preceding sketch, must always be pleasing under a favorable sky; but it is one of those scenes which is totally unappropriated to the spot from whence it is taken. It is a view that may be seen from a door of a cottage, or a gate on the high road, there is very little of the foreground that marks it as belonging to a Gentleman's residence, yet it presents a landscape so pleasing, that it is capable of little improvement. I must however observe that as the lawn is flat, its extent is more perfectly shewn by the flock of sheep which has been lately introduced into Cheshire, because these ornamental animals are continually changing their positions, and forming themselves into a variety of groups, to which no pencil can do sufficient justice.

I should be sorry to see the opposite hill frittered into formal corn fields, or even its present beautiful outline disturbed by plantation, which will confer no additional importance as it will not seem to belong to the Aston Estate, being so disjoined by the river and a vast tract of mixed property.

The Approach.

The map does not extend to the point on the turnpike from whence I think a very important and interesting line of approach might be made for visitors, which would be only a few yards more distant, and might be kept good by excluding all heavy carriages; these may continue to go by the present highway to the village. There seems no possibility of diverting this public road, but by destroying the village, and this is a part of modern improvement which I never have seen it necessary to advise. There must always be a back road to the stables, offices, kitchen-garden &c, and if the principal approach can be conducted by another line, there can be no objection to the back-road being a public one.

The approaches both from Frodsham and Warrington may enter the park near the present gate, from whence the house must be compleatly hid by plantation, and instead of presenting itself at a distance with the roof below the sight, I wish it not to be shewn till at such a part of the ground as may present it on a level above the eye, as I have represented in the following sketch.

The House.

I conceive that the proposed addition of offices can nowhere be better placed than to the west provided they do not project so far as to impede the view from the south. And if a green house be built at the north-east corner the back of that building might correspond with a part of the offices on the opposite side while the remainder might be hid in the plantation.

There would be some convenience in a plantation to join the house with the stables for the sake of a sheltered line of walk, but I think upon the whole it would produce an air of confinement, and therefore in the foregoing sketch I have left an opening to display the long glade from the approach. I do not in this sketch presume to intrude my opinion concerning the alteration of the house, but rather to shew the general effect of the house on the surrounding scenery, with such alteration as I understand Mr. J. Wyatt proposes, altho' I have unfortunately never been able to meet him on the subject, and have delayed the completion of this book on that account only; because I am aware that his inventive genius may suggest improvements, or foresee objections, which do not fall immediately within the line of my profession.

Walks and Drives.

In the plantation to the west which will surround the offices, there may be a walk in the dingle with some interesting Views towards the fine scenery at the junction of the Weaver and the Mersey. From the east corner or Green house a Walk may cross the lawn towards the plantation surrounding the stables, and from thence will be a sheltered line of communication with the kitchen-garden, the village, and the church. I have already observed that there ought to be an opening left betwixt the house and stables, yet as this needs not be wide, the walk may be protected from cattle by a light iron rail, or post and chain in the lowest ground which would be very little seen.

A Drive along the east lawn towards the rich woods hanging down over the river, may return thro' the farm by way of variety, if that farm be ornamented with wood in the manner I have proposed, but if it is a mere farm consisting of large square fields divided by common hedges, it will not fall within the limits of my profession to consider it as a part of the beautiful scenery at Aston.

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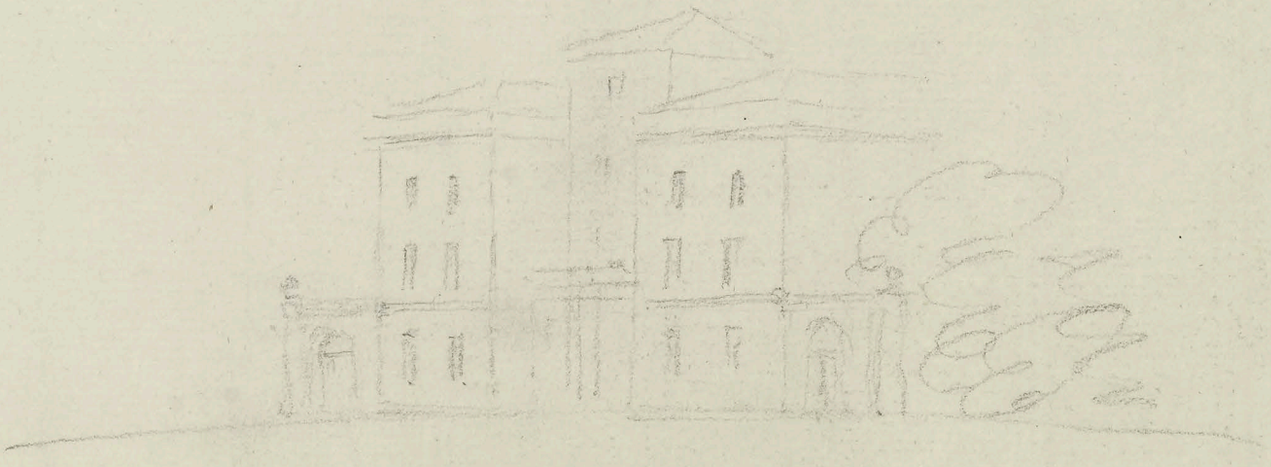
Section to shew
the Cast iron frames
to support a trellis



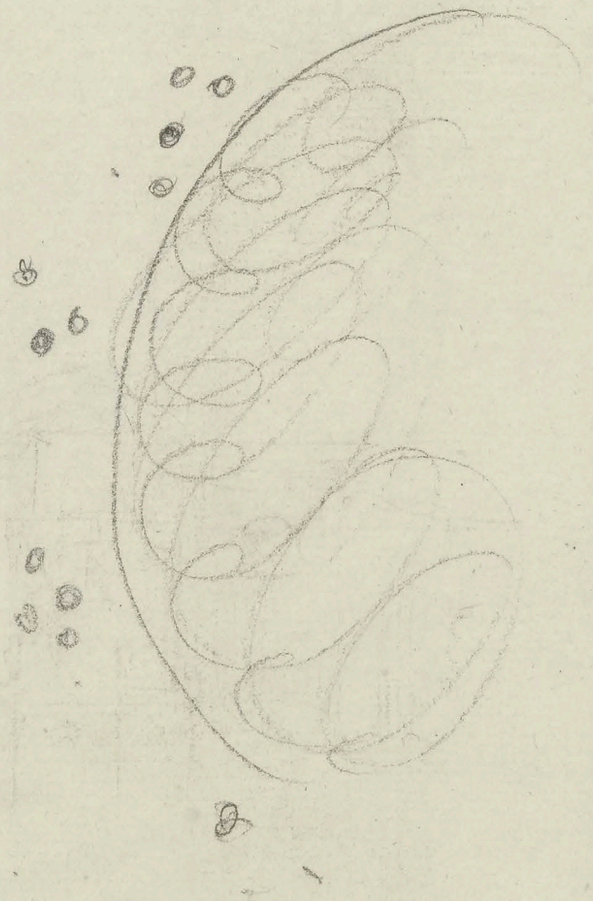
By adding wing walls to the 2 Corners of the house as described on the plan of which a hint is here given — the house will appear better supported — & the strong force of wind at the Corners will be rendered —

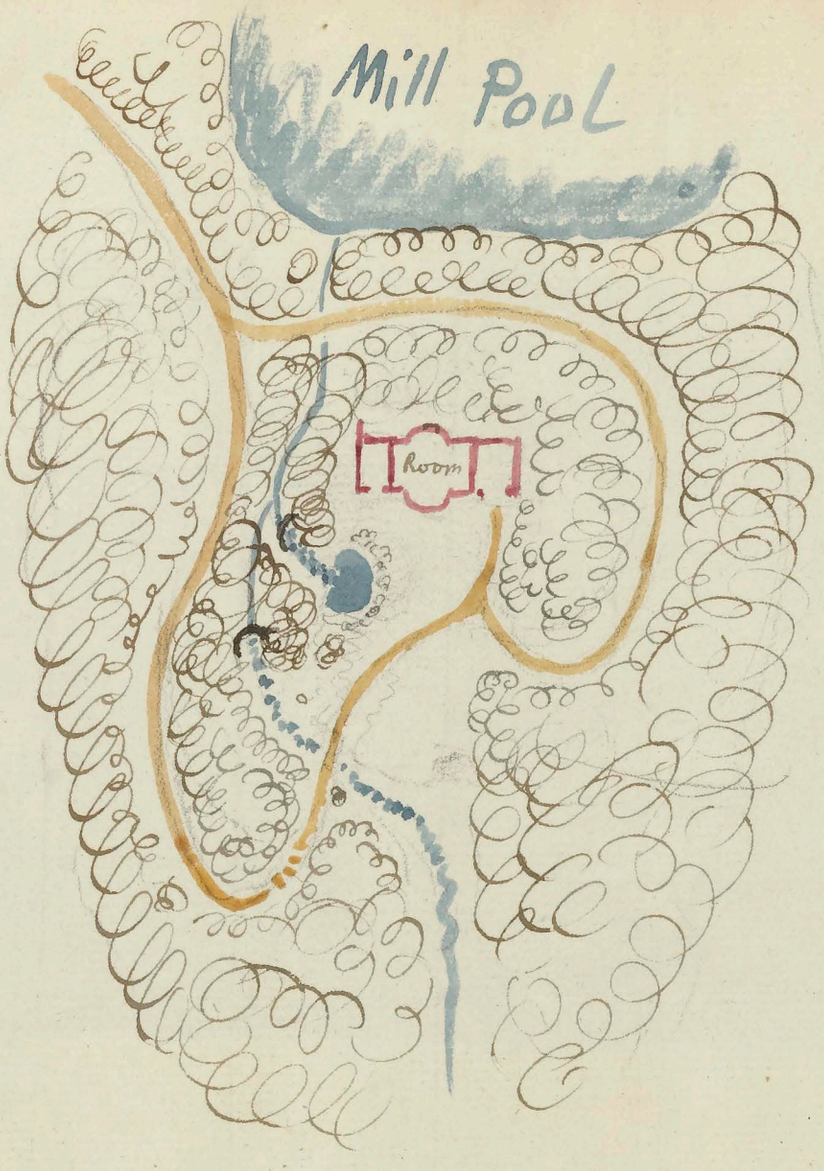
At the North Side — it will give an opportunity of adding sheds & other Conveniencies

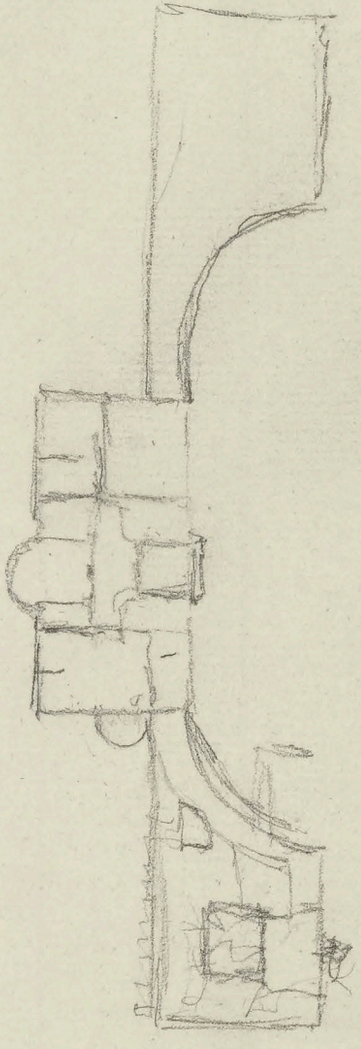
On the South Side & cast iron posts — with a few rails to support a horizontal lattice on which vines or trailing flowers might be trained

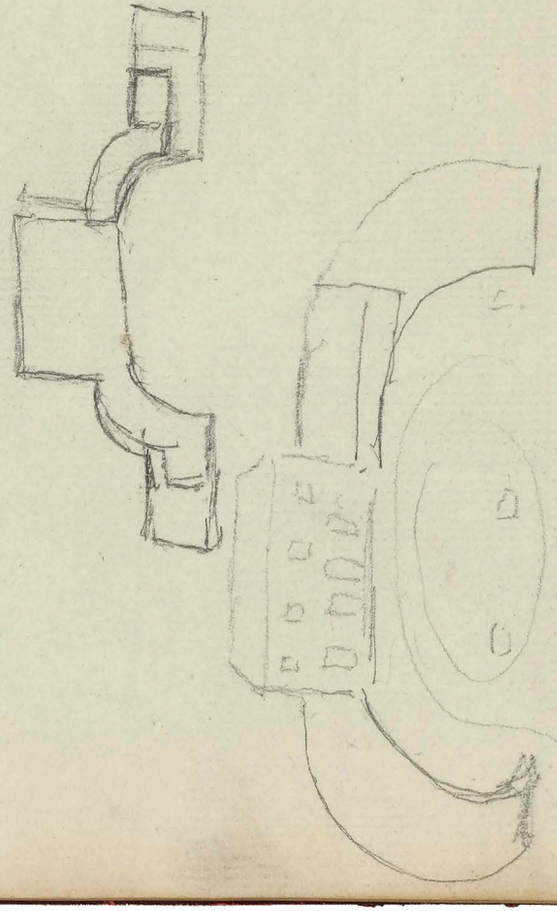
1902

The Plan is now being grown so much as to require thinning – some trees may be brought out to break the formality of the outline & hide the fence




Mill Pool
Room





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haesoo